

The Pancake Mill

A Fairy Tale, translated by Joan Almon

Once there was an old peasant and his wife who lived a pure but hard life, for they were very poor. One day there was not a little crumb of bread left in the house, so they went to the forest to gather acorns. They gathered the acorns, brought them home and wanted to eat them. As they were eating the acorns, the old woman let one fall. It fell through the floorboard into the basement. Soon the acorns sprouted roots and sent out a shoot, and the shoot grew up to the floor. The old woman saw this and said to her husband, "Listen, old man, you must cut a hole in the floor so that the acorn can grow. When it is large enough, we will not have to go into the woods any more. But I can pick acorns here in our house."

The old man knocked a hole into the floor. The acorn grew and grew up to the ceiling of the room, from the ceiling up to the roof, and from the roof right up into the sky.

When they had no more acorns the old man took a sack and climbed up the oak tree. He climbed ever higher and higher, and all at once he found himself above the clouds.

He went here and there in the sky and saw a rooster with a golden comb sitting on a golden hand mill. The peasant did not think about the situation for long. He took the rooster and the golden mill and climbed down. When he safely arrived down below, he asked his wife: "Old woman, is there something to eat?"

"Wait, I will grind the acorns in the mill right away," said the old woman. She took the mill and began to grind. Then it ground out a pancake and a little pie. Now they had enough to eat.

One day a man came riding along and asked, "Can I have something to eat?"

"Certainly, you may have a pancake."

The old woman took the mill and turned it. The mill ground out pancakes and little pies, and the guest ate well. After the meal he said: "Woman, sell me the mill!"

"No this I cannot sell!"

Then the man stole the mill and rode away with it. When the two old people noticed that the mill was stolen, they grieved terribly.

Do not grieve said the rooster with the golden comb. "I will fly after the man and catch up with him."

The rooster came flying up to the man's house, flew to the gate and called:

"Cock-a-doodle-do, I've come after you.
Ki-ker-i-ki, give the mill back to me!"

When the man heard this, he became very angry and ordered: "Throw that rooster into the water!"

The servants found the rooster and threw him into the well. But the rooster could speak, and said "Little beak, little beak, drink up all the water!" And it drank up all the water. He drank and drank the whole well dry and flew again to the man's house. He sat on the balcony and called:

"Cock-a-doodle-do, I've come after you.
Ki-ker-i-ki, give the mill back to me!"

Then the old man ordered the rooster caught and thrown into the glowing oven. The servants caught the rooster and threw him into the oven, in the middle of the fire. But the rooster could speak, and said: "Little beak, little beak, spit out all the water." It spit the water into the fire and extinguished it. He fluffed himself and shook himself and flew out of the oven and cried:

"Cock-a-doodle-do, I've come after you.
Ki-ker-i-ki, give the mill back to me!"

The guests heard this and ran from the house, and the man followed after them. The rooster with the golden comb quickly seized the mill and flew with it back to the house. The old couple rejoiced and together with the rooster lived happily ever after.